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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 000780

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STATE FOR NEA/IR, NEA/ARP, INS/CPI

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: IRANIAN PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD'S MAY 13-14 VISIT TO  
THE UAE

REF: A. ABU DHABI 737

[1](#)B. ABU DHABI 779

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Classified By: CDA MARTIN QUINN, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. On May 13, UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan received Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with full ceremony in the first-ever visit to the UAE by an Iranian head of state. Meetings reportedly focused on increasing economic ties and cooperation on regional issues such as Iraqi security and establishment of a joint ministerial committee. During a May 13 address at the Iranian Club football stadium in Dubai and again at a May 14 press conference in Abu Dhabi, Ahmadinejad made characteristic inflammatory remarks directed towards the U.S. Ahmadinejad left the UAE on May 14 for Oman. Neither the issue of the disputed islands nor the matter of the Iran-bound Chinese containers, currently being held in Dubai, seems to have been raised. End Summary.

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POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE AT HEAD OF STATE  
AIRPORT ARRIVAL CEREMONY; FORMATION OF  
JOINT UAE-IRAN MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE  
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[1](#)2. (C) Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad arrived in the UAE on Sunday, May 13, accompanied by Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Labor Minister Mohammed Jahromi, to a full-blown Head of State airport reception complete with honor guard and band playing the national anthems. On arrival Ahmadinejad was greeted and embraced by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MbR). The Iranian president was conducted to Khalifa's residence at Al Bateen Palace for introduction to UAE ruling family and ministers and hosted at a formal lunch. Subsequently he was escorted on a windshield tour of Dubai with MbR himself behind the wheel. Coverage of the visit on Abu Dhabi and Dubai TV stations Sunday evening was extensive, even celebratory. UAE media reported that the presidential meetings reviewed bilateral relations in general, with particular attention paid to trade and the economy; both presidents stated that they want to open wider avenues of joint economic cooperation. (Note: The UAE is Iran's largest non-oil trading partner accounting for over \$7.5 billion in non-oil imports from the UAE last year. End Note.) In speaking to the press following the meeting with President Khalifa, Ahmadinejad stated that Iran has "no restrictions" on its expansion of ties with the UAE, stating that he considers the UAE's "progress and prosperity as our own."

Khalifa added that the UAE intends to boost its "age-old" historical ties with Iran, and announced the formation of a "joint ministerial committee" to be headed by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries.

¶3. (U) Khalifa called on the broader international community to "take into serious consideration in all its related resolutions the collective interest of all the countries in the region." The UAE President is reported to have emphasized to Ahmadinejad the importance of reconciling Iraqi factions, and the need to revive the Middle East Peace Process establishing a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Ahmadinejad praised the "balanced policies" of the UAE stating: "Such wise policies enabled the UAE to achieve development in all aspects of life, and helped create a shining example for others to emulate."

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DUBAI STADIUM SPEECH: "AMERICA, LEAVE  
THE REGION!"  
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¶4. (SBU) Following the lunch in Abu Dhabi, Vice President and Dubai Ruler Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum accompanied Ahmadinejad to Dubai for meetings, where the Iranian stressed economic and social development as the keys to peace, stability, and co-existence in the Gulf. Addressing a May 13 evening gathering, reported to have numbered in the thousands, at the Iranian Club football stadium in Dubai, Ahmadinejad called on GCC states to abandon their military alliances with the U.S. and pointing his remarks at America hurled the following defiance: "Every time your name is mentioned, America, hatred builds up. Go fix yourself. This is Iran's advice to you. Leave the region."

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MORE ANTI-U.S. BARBS AT ABU DHABI

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PRESS CONFERENCE  
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¶5. (SBU) During an Abu Dhabi press conference at the Emirates Palace Hotel on the morning of May 14, Ahmadinejad delivered a characteristically inflammatory statement indicating that Iran would retaliate in the event of an American strike while noting that Iran had agreed to meet the U.S. in Baghdad for "the sake of the Iraqi people." Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying: "They (the U.S.) cannot strike Iran; the Iranian people can protect themselves and retaliate. They (the Americans) should understand that if they should make this mistake, the retaliation of the Iranian people will be severe and they will repent."

¶6. (C) Members of the UAE party at Al Bateen Palace lunch included Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ), and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (HbZ). It is post's impression that no other recent visitor to the UAE has received quite such a large reception with so much accompanying publicity in the media. According to a local diplomatic observer, the UAE's warm response to the Iranian President reflects nothing so much as its fear of provoking its larger neighbor.

¶7. (U) The following members of the ruling Al-Nahyan family are reported to have attended the Al-Bateen May 13 arrival lunch:

- Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,
- Deputy Prime Minister Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,
- National Security Advisor Hazza bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,
- Interior Minister Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,
- Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,
- Minister of Presidential Affairs Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,
- Chief of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court Hamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,

--Chairman of the Zayed Foundation Ahmed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,  
--Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Emiri Flight Authority Tahnoun  
bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, and  
--Abu Dhabi Eastern Region Representative Tahnoun bin  
Mohammed Al-Nahyan.  
Also present were Federal National Council Speaker Abdul Aziz  
Al-Ghurair, Minister of Economy Sheikha Lubna Al-Qassimi,  
Social Affairs Minister Mariam Al-Roumi, and Minister of  
State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammed Al-Gergawi. UAE  
Ambassador to Iran Khalifa Shaheen Al-Mirri was also present  
with the new Iranian ambassador to the UAE Hamid Reza Asafi.

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ABOUT THOSE CONTAINERS  
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18. (S) In May 14 conversation with MFA Director of  
International Organizations Yacoub Al-Hosani, EconChief  
inquired about the status of the three Iranian-bound  
containers, that were being held by the UAE. Al-Hosani  
stated that, to the best of his knowledge, the Iranians had  
not raised the issue. He added that the UAE preferred to  
deal with the subject at a "technical rather than political"  
level. He reiterated that the UAE would not release two  
containers until the Chinese authorities had the opportunity  
to decide what to do with them. One container was being  
shipped in clear violation of UNSCRs 1737 and 1747 and would  
need to be returned to China. Any request by the Iranians to  
release the containers would be turned down.

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NEXT STOP OMAN  
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19. (C) Local sources report that Ahmadinejad spent the night  
at the Mushrif Palace Guest House in Abu Dhabi and then he  
departed for Oman May 14 afternoon arriving in Muscat at  
about 16:30 local time, where he was met by the Omani Deputy  
Prime Minister.

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COMMENT:  
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10. (C) Reflecting on the Ahmadinejad visit, Acting MFA U/S  
Tariq Al-Haidan, veteran UAE diplomat who served 10 years in  
Tehran, told CDA that "it went well," hinting that its timing  
may reflect UAE interest in balancing the impact of Vice  
President Cheney's recent visit. Al-Haidan said that despite  
a press rumor in Saudi-owned Arabic daily Al Sharq Al Awsat  
that the visit might produce an initiative with regard to Abu  
Mousa Island, the entire UAE-Iran islands dispute was never  
raised by either side. Al-Haidan volunteered that

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Ahmadinejad had confirmed to the UAE Iran's intention to meet  
with the U.S. in Baghdad on the question of Iraq's security.  
QUINN